

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Boise County is of historic significance in the State of Idaho. The County seat at Idaho City was once the largest population center in Idaho.

During the past 40 years, residents and visitors of Boise County have experienced numerous large wildfires, landslides, earthquakes, severe winter storms, and hurricane force wind storms.

- Wildfires as large as 100,000 acres struck Boise County in 1989 and in 1994.
- Wildfires from 100 to 10,000 acres have historically occurred in Boise County during most summers or falls.

The severe winter storm of 1996-97 caused extensive damage to Boise County and to the State highways within the County. Highway and private property damage, extended loss of electricity, road closure, and zero-visibility flight conditions, led Boise County to request and receive a Presidential Disaster Declaration.

The population of Boise County, which was over 3,500 in the 1990 census, had risen to over 6,700 in the 2000 census.

### **1.1 Plan Methodology**

The Boise County Wildland Fire Mitigation Plan was initiated by the Boise County Commissioners, Boise County, Idaho in November 2002. The Commissioners required that the plan:

- Coordinate with the Idaho State Strategic Plan for the implementation of the National Fire Plan, and
- Utilize the format developed for all hazard mitigation plans provided by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

The Boise County plan is based on information, research, and data from numerous county, state, federal and private sources. Boise County contracted Dynamac Corporation as the coordinator of the Boise County Wildfire Group and plan developer.

The Boise County Wildland Fire Mitigation Plan was under the direction of the Boise County Wildfire Group (BCWG). This group consisted of numerous Boise County residents, Boise County Fire Fighters Association members, Fire Chiefs of all the County Volunteer Fire Departments, Home Owners' Association Representatives, private land owners, Boise County Planning and Zoning, Boise County Disaster Coordinator, Boise County Highway Department, State of Idaho Disaster Services, Foresters and Fire Managers of the Idaho Department of Lands, (IDL) Idaho Fish and Game, District Rangers, Land Managers and Fire/Fuels Managers of the U.S. Forest Service (U.S. Forest Service) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

Organizational structure was managed under a modified Incident Command System (ICS) for optimal information exchange and hazard identification throughout the County. (Appendix, C ii, "Boise County Wild Fire Group Table of Organization").

The Boise County Wildfire Group conducted monthly meetings from January to June 2003. Group Supervisors met with Team Leaders weekly or bi-monthly. Development of the Boise County Wildfire Mitigation Plan was achieved through input to and from the County Wildfire Group. (Appendix, C “Objectives of Monthly Meetings”). The Boise County newspaper, the “The Idaho World,” published progress reports and informative articles after each BCWG meeting, including phone numbers and e-mail addresses for public input, or participation.

Research data and public input addressing wildfire hazards and mitigation recommendations conducted by Dynamac Corporation in Boise County communities during 2001 has also been used in the plan formulation. The information and data gathered by Dynamac Corporation included six public meetings in three different areas of Boise County. Numerous wildfire hazard questionnaires were completed by residents of the County, including those mailed to over 80 questionnaires to residents of the Lowman area. An example of the questionnaire and collated responses are located in Appendix C. Numerous stakeholder interviews were conducted. A list of Boise County stakeholders interviewed is also in Appendix C. Evaluation of wildfire hazards on Federal and State lands utilized WUI and non-WUI watersheds at risk in Boise County relating to their fuels type, condition and density, combined with slope, aspect and soil stability. This rating system identified high risk watersheds and was developed by the Idaho Department of Lands fire managers and hydrologists, U.S. Forest Service fire/fuels managers and Bureau of Land Management fuels specialists. Defensible space and structure evaluation were conducted by Dynamac Corporation Fire Specialists using NFPA 299 and NFPA 1144 hazard severity formats.

Priorities for the Boise County Wildland Fire Mitigation plan are:

1. Protection of Life: Identify and provide mitigation recommendations for areas of high wildfire risks that are in or adjacent to homes and communities, and improve critical county infrastructure facilities.
2. Protection of Property: Identify and provide mitigation recommendations for properties of moderate and high wildfire risk. Increase public awareness through education, training and information sharing addressing wildfire risks and mitigation measures.
3. Protection of Resources: Identify resources that are at risk to wildfires and implement natural resource planning to protect these resources. To include protection and mitigation of at risk watersheds, vegetation, fish, wildlife and maintain soil stability.
4. Improve Wildfire Emergency Services: Improve county infrastructure and wildfire emergency service planning, training, communications, and equipment.
5. Increase Public Awareness of Wildfire Prevention: Increase public awareness of firewise practices and wildfire prevention through education training and information sharing.
6. Improve Partnerships for Implementation: Utilize partnerships currently established and develop additional participation with State, Federal, and private organizations.